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THE CHURCH, THE CHRISTIAN, *and* THE WAR

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The Church, the Christian, and the War.

HOULD a Christian fight?
Should a Christian go to war?
Literature is being circulated at the present time in Christian circles in which the above questions are answered most emphatically in the negative. The "non-resistant" writers argue that it is contrary to the teachings of Christ and the apostles for a Christian to participate in war. We believe that the logical error in the reasoning of these Christian pacifists lies in their failure to distinguish between the relation of the Church of Christ to the State, and the relation of the Christian citizen to the State. The Church, as a divine institution, occupies a peculiar position here upon earth, which forbids her, as an institution, to engage in the active support of war, but this is not true of the individual member of the Church. The individual member of the Church is a citizen of the State, has sworn allegiance to the government under which he lives and whose protection he enjoys, and has faithfully promised to uphold that government against those who menace its existence.

Many people at the present time are losing sight of this distinction, namely, the distinction between the attitude of the Church of Christ and the attitude of the Christian citizen towards the war. Hence,on the one hand,there are those who believe and advocate that the Church should lend her most active support to the war as war, a position which is decidedly un-Biblical. And, on the other hand, there are those (Christian pacifists, "non-resistants") who maintain that a Christian should never fight as a soldier of a civil government, and this position is equally un-Scriptural.

In the following pages we shall attempt to give an answer to the twofold question: What should be the attitude of the Church, and what should be the attitude of the Christian Citizen towards the present war?

THE CHURCH AND THE WAR.

The Church of Jesus Christ, as **a heavenly institution, with a heavenly mission and a heavenly destiny,** can take no part in the hostilities and animosities of war. The attitude of the Church, **as a church,** must be a purely spiritual attitude.

The Church is not of this world, does not originate here upon earth, was not conceived by the world, nor the men of the world, but is the CREATION OF GOD. Jesus said to Pilate: "My kingdom is not of this world; if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight that I should not be delivered unto the Jews." Christ's kingdom is His rule, His reign, over the hearts and lives of those who are born again by the Holy Spirit, a kingdom which will include the whole redeemed creation after the second coming of Christ. The very heart of this kingdom, the center, the core, as it were, is the Church, the body of Christ. When Christ therefore says: "My kingdom is not of this world," then it is evident that the HEART of this kingdom, the redeemed body of Christ, is not of this world.

And therefore Christ says to Pilate: "My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight that I should not be delivered unto the Jews." My disciples have not resisted the officers and soldiers in the Garden of Gethsemane when they arrested me. "If my kingdom were of this world, I would use the same weapons that the world uses, but since my kingdom is not of this world, we do not fight as the world fights." Now if the Church may not even fight with worldly weapons, swords, staves, or guns, gunpowder, submarines and zeppelins, **in defence of herself,** then it is just as clear as can be, that the Church may not participate in the wars which the civil governments wage.

And just as the origin of the Church is heavenly ("not of this world," said Jesus), so also the character of the Church is heavenly. The Church is an abnormal institu-

tion in this world as it is today. It is a gathering of men and women who are chosen OUT OF THE WORLD, SEPARATED FROM THE WORLD, born again by the Holy Spirit, sanctified in Christ. To the heavenly character of the Church belongs her internationalism or catholicism. The Church knows no national boundaries. God so loved the world, the Jews, the Gentiles, the Germans, the English, the French, the Americans, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever, Americans or Germans, believeth in Him, should not perish. God loved the WORLD! The boundaries of the Church are world-wide. Hence, the Church has no national flag. You can't fly the Stars and Stripes from your church steeple and call that the flag of the Church. The only banner of the Church is the Truth, and her glorious ensign is the Cross of Christ.

And just because the Church knows no national boundaries, she cannot participate in a war of one nation against another nation. If the Church were a German institution, then the Church could give her strength and support to Germany and fight the enemies of Germany. Or, if the Church were an English institution, then the Church could fight the enemies of England. The Church, as a cosmopolitan, universal, catholic, world-wide institution, cannot fight for any one division of the human race or any government representing a section of humanity.

The mission, or task, of the Church is spiritual. It is not commercial, to buy and sell goods; it is not industrial, to manufacture goods for the purpose of clothing and housing men; it is not political, to rule men and nations; it is not military, to wage war. **The great task of the Church is to preach the Word of God; to preach the glorious Gospel of peace between God and man in the blood of Jesus Christ; the Gospel of peace between man and man and nation and nation.** This is the supreme task of the Church, EVEN IN TIME OF WAR; hence, to urge men to lay aside their differences, or rather to adjust them in the interest of humanity; to urge men to approach one another in the Spirit of the

Gospel, seeking one another's good, not one another's destruction; to promote a true Christian brotherhood, such a brotherhood as is the fruit of regeneration by the Holy Spirit, and of faith in the Christ of Calvary. This is the task of the Church and this task she can never perform save as she refuses to support war. The Church as an institution, the Church in her official capacity, the Church speaking through her representatives, must refuse to choose sides so that she is unhampered in the performance of her task.

And in the same sense that the origin and character and task of the Church are heavenly, so also the destiny of the Church is heavenly. Her citizenship is heavenly, Phil. 3: 20, and she looks for a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness, 2 Peter 3. The ideal of the Church is not a brotherhood of nations with Christ left out, nor a world-democracy which refuses to recognize the sovereign God as the only source of all authority. The glorious ideal of the Church is the everlasting kingdom of Jesus Christ in a world made free from the curse of sin by Christ Himself at His Second Coming.

In view of all this, the Church, as an institution, and in her official capacity, can take no part in the hostilities of war. She cannot preach sermons in which the wrongs of other nations are emphasized and the people wronged are aroused to retaliate. The German and English clergymen have been guilty of this sin, and it behooves the Church of Christ in America to guard against this error. Likewise, the Church has no right to raise money in an official way, through ecclesiastical channels, for the prosecution of the war. No more than the Church may raise money for the purpose of launching commercial or industrial enterprises, may she raise money wherewith to strengthen the sinews of war. Moreover, it is not only un-Scriptural for the Church of Christ to raise money for the prosecution of the war, but it is also a violation of a fundamental principle of the Republic, the complete separation of Church and State.

If it be legitimate for the Church to support the State, will it not be legitimate for the State to support the Church? And will not this be a menace both to the State and to the Church? LET US HOLD FAST TO FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES! ! !

But while the Church cannot give her active support to the war as war, she may not for one moment assume an indifferent attitude towards the war. She should recognize this great war as the most stupendous event since the dawn of the Protestant Reformation, an event of far-reaching significance for the Church of Jesus Christ and the kingdom of God, an event which represents a most important stage in the fulfillment of prophecy, and which should form the subject of careful and cautious, but none the less diligent study.

Above all, the Church should emphasize the solemn fact that the lamentable apostacy of Christendom is the FUNDAMENTAL CAUSE OF THIS TERRIBLE CONFLAGRATION. Secondary causes are tyranny, greed, oppression, international jealousy and hatred, an Imperialistic England and a militaristic Germany with ideals born of Nietzsche's doctrine of the "Superman." But while these are secondary causes, the fundamental cause is the apostacy of the so-called Christian nations. This great war is a scourge with which a holy and righteous God is scourging Europe and America. We read in Isaiah 24: 5, 6: "The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof, because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant. THEREFORE HATH THE CURSE DEVOURED THE EARTH, and they that dwell therein are desolate: therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned and few men left." This solemn word of Isaiah can be applied literally to present-day conditions in Christendom.

We have defiled the earth with our idolatry and accompanying immorality. We have worshipped the idols of Money, and Pleasure, and Fashion, and Science, and Prog-

ress, and Enlightenment. And this blatant idolatry has been accompanied with an immorality and vice which has reached such huge proportions that our modern cities are nothing less than Sodoms and Gomorrahs. (See Reports of Chicago, Baltimore, New York, and even Grand Rapids Vice Commissions.)

WE HAVE "TRANSGRESSED THE LAWS." Profanity, Sabbath-desecration, disrespect for parents, murder, suicide, adultery, fornication, divorce, are the outstanding and glaring sins of this generation.

WE "HAVE CHANGED THE ORDINANCE." Men are tampering with those fundamental laws which God has written in the constitution of things. Think of your "birth control," the murder of unborn children, sex perversion, the attempt to wipe out sex distinctions, etc., etc.

Is it any wonder that the rest of that text from Isaiah is also literally true? "The curse," (this great war) "hath devoured the earth; and they that dwell therein are desolate" (the millions of widows and orphans in Europe and Canada): "therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned" (the tens of thousands of soldiers burned by the fire of cannon and bombs and burning gases); "and few men are left" (few able-bodied men are left in London, Paris, Berlin). War, no matter how justifiable, is in itself a scourge, and the Christian sees in the present war, confined to the nations of Christendom, the righteous scourge of a just and holy God because of the terrible apostacy of the present generation.

Let the Church of God, called to denounce the sins of individuals and of nations, emphasize this solemn and tremendous truth, and arouse the Christian peoples to repentance and conversion unto the living God. Let her again and again preach such texts as these: "If My people, which are called by My name, shall humble themselves, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."

This attitude of the Church of Christ, tho offensive to vast numbers, will prove to be a far greater blessing to a war-torn world than any attempt on the part of the Church to propagate war.

Furthermore, the Church may and should most heartily support the Red Cross work, the Y. M. C. A. work in the army and navy, and all forms of relief, organized for the humane purpose of alleviating the suffering and distress accompanying war.

Neither should the Church hesitate to denounce all disobedience to the divinely instituted authorities. Without entering into an extended discussion of the war, which is better suited to the platform than the pulpit, the Church can emphasize the teaching of God's Word that all men should respect the authority vested in the divinely instituted government. Romans 13. Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers, for there is no power but of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power (the authority of the government) resisteth the ordinance of God." 1 Peter 2, "Honor the king."

THE CHRISTIAN CITIZEN AND THE WAR.

In the above paragraphs we have made it clear, we think, that the Church, as a divine institution, with a spiritual character and spiritual task, cannot lend her active support to the war. Does this position of the Church justify us in drawing the conclusion that the CHRISTIAN may not go to war? We think not.

Those who teach that a Christian should not go to war, confuse the sphere of the Church with that of the State. The Church has no right to prosecute criminals, but should rather bring to those criminals the Gospel of repentance and faith in Christ for the remission of sins. Is it therefore wrong for the State to arrest criminals, try them in courts of justice and punish their crimes? Of course, not! This is

one of the functions of the State. See Romans 13. And in the exercise of this function the State has the right, when the crime committed justifies it, to put the criminal to death. Gen. 9: 6, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made He man." Romans 13, "For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil . . . . If thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil." God has given to the State the "SWORD," and when the occasion justifies it, the State may wield the sword. (Those humanitarians, who before the war argued against capital punishment, ought to be consistent and hold that the State has no right to prosecute war, but we notice that the majority of these humanitarians are enthusiastically supporting the war! O, consistency, thou art a jewel!) The Bible teaches, then, that under certain circumstances the State (not the Church, nor any other institution, much less any individual) has the right to take human life. This teaching justifies capital punishment and likewise justifies war.

This is, indeed, a tremendous power which the Sovereign God has vested in the State, and it behooves the State to exercise this power with great discretion and only for the most justifiable reasons, but it cannot be denied that the Bible gives the State the right to go to war.

If the State has the right to go to war, then the citizen, even the Christian citizen, has the right to support the government in the war it is waging. This is the right of the Christian citizen as well as of the worldling. There is not one law of God for a Christian and another law of God for a non-Christian. What is wrong in the one case, is also wrong in the other case. Some of the non-resistants argue that it is alright for a worldling to fight, for "he belongs to this world," but it is not right for a Christian to fight, because he belongs "to the kingdom of heaven." Here again we meet with that hopeless confusion of spheres and duties for which the non-resistants are noted. We repeat, if it be

wrong for the Christian to fight, it is also wrong for the non-Christian to fight. We believe that the Christian has the right to fight, BECAUSE THE STATE HAS THE RIGHT TO FIGHT AND THE STATE CAN WAGE WAR ONLY WHEN SUPPORTED BY ITS CITIZENSHIP, AND THAT CITIZENSHIP IS MADE UP OF CHRISTIANS AND NON-CHRISTIANS.

If a Christian believes that the State has no right at any time to wage war, or that he, as a Christian, may not go to war, he has no right to be a citizen. Citizenship involves the duty of going to war when called by the government. From time immemorial every government has expected its citizens to fight in time of war. This is not something new. It has always been thus. One cannot hold citizenship in any country in the whole wide world without that very citizenship involving the duty of going to war. If a Christian does not believe in going to war and actually refuses to obey the government when called into war service, he should refuse to be a citizen. And he should refuse to be a citizen, not merely in time of actual war, but in time of peace. He cannot conscientiously and consistently support any government which believes in its right to wage war, when he does not believe in that right.

But this thing does not end here. If a man cannot be a citizen of a country because he cannot take the full oath of allegiance to the government, then he has no right to live under that government. The Christian who expects the government to protect his bank account, his home, his dear ones and all that he hold precious in this world, but does not believe in supporting that government when its existence is menaced, should not believe in his right to live under that government. We do not advocate expelling him from the country, if in all other respects he is a loyal citizen, but he himself ought to realize the inconsistency of his attitude.

And all this is in full harmony with the teaching of the Holy Bible that the authority vested in the State is a divine

authority, which every citizen should respect and obey. Jesus said to Pilate (a heathen governor): "Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above." The power exercised by Pilate, the power to crucify a man or save him from the cross, hence THE RIGHT TO TAKE HUMAN LIFE, WAS GIVEN HIM FROM ABOVE. In this one majestic sentence of the Christ, the State is declared to be clothed with the power to take human life when the occasion justifies it. We read in 1 Peter 2: 13, 14: "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king as supreme; or unto governors, as unto those that are sent by Him for the punishment of evil-doers." In God's Providence we are allowed the right today to choose our own form of government, but the power and authority vested in that government is divine, God-given, and therefore it is the duty of every citizen, and also of the man who refuses to be a citizen, to obey that government. If the government of the United States of America believes it to be its solemn duty to wage war against Germany, because of her deliberate and persistent invasion of our national rights, then it is the duty of every man and woman to support the government.

Personally we may abhor war and heartily deplore the entrance of our peaceful and peace-loving land into this colossal conflict; we have no right to obstruct the government in carrying out what the government sincerely believes to be the solemn duty of the hour. No one can accuse the President of hasty action. He has bent every effort in the direction of maintaining peace, and is it not probable that it was this very policy which almost cost him his re-election last fall? The campaign slogan, "He has kept us out of war," did not receive the hearty and overwhelming endorsement of the American people. It was evident from the tremendous support given the Republican candidate that a large portion of the American people believed that the time had come for the nation to vindicate its rights. During the winter following this election the President steadfastly

continued to labor in the interest of maintaining peace with Germany, and even put forth a brilliant effort in the month of January to reconcile the belligerents, but all in vain. In the meanwhile the German government persisted in sinking American vessels and destroying American lives. The "overt act," which forced the nation into war, came in March. Three American vessels, flying the American flag, TWO OF WHICH WERE WITHOUT A CARGO, AND BOUND FOR THIS COUNTRY, HENCE COULD IN NO-WISE BE REGARDED AS LENDING AID TO THE ENEMIES OF GERMANY, WERE SUNK WITHOUT A WARNING. This was the final act in a long series in violation of our national rights which forced this country into war with Germany. Let it be remembered also, that not only merchant vessels were sunk, but the same fate was meted out to our HOSPITAL SHIPS AND BOATS CARRYING RELIEF TO STRICKEN BELGIUM, AND THAT THESE SHIPS BORE UNMISTAKABLE MARKS OF IDENTITY.

No doubt the government was also in the possession of information by which it was influenced in adopting the course pursued in April. Since our entrance into the war a flood of light has been thrown upon a long series of plots and intrigues against the government and people of the United States by the German government, even while this government was bending every effort to preserve peace.

If, as Christians, we believe that the Sovereign Ruler of the world, the Almighty God, has instituted government for the purpose of maintaining justice on earth, then it is our duty to support the government in its effort to maintain this justice for ourselves and for humanity at large.

We have the writing of God's hand in history, teaching us that there are times when nations must fight to preserve that which is precious. If the Christian armies of Europe had not resisted the advance of the Mohammedan hordes in 732 at the battle of Tours, we would all be Mohammedans

today. If war is always wrong, then brave little Holland should not have resisted the tyranny and despotism of Spain in the Eighty Years' War. If it is always wrong to fight, then Napoleon should not have been blocked in his efforts to create for himself a world empire in which the will of the despotic Napoleon was to be the highest law. We thank God that all men and all Christians have not been "non-resistants." We thank God that He gave our sturdy and noble ancestors a glorious victory in their long battle for freedom and justice! We thank God that He raised up a great Christian general, the Duke of Wellington, to bring the despotic career of Napoleon to an ignominious end in the famous battle of Waterloo! And we pray the same Almighty God that He bless our beloved country as she fights today, NOT FOR CONQUEST NOR MATERIAL GAIN, BUT IN VINDICATION OF JUSTICE AND RIGHTEOUSNESS!